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1963/10/30

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

DTG: 301100Z October 1963

FROM: HARKINS SAIGON

TO: TAYLOR, WASHINGTON, D. C.

INFO: FELT

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When I said last week I was out of the coup business I did not realize I was going to be so out of touch. In fact the Ambassador agreed to keep me informed. So I was a bit shocked when the Ambassador called me today on instructions from Washington to collaborate on reply on message (I don't have the number) seeking further info from here. I was shocked because I had not seen any of the SAIGON 20 series 2040, 2041 etc.

I did not know there had been further contacts between Don and Conein. I really did not realize how imminent Don's plan is to implementation.

As we do not know the plan I can not say how good it is. To me it just looked like Don has run down the Army roster indicating troops to be used.

How the 21st, 9th, 7th, 23rd and 5th Divisions can lend any immediate support to an effort in Saigon is hard to visualize. If they are brought into the area the V.C. will certainly take advantage and I can not guess how long it would take to reestablish G.V.N. in the abandoned areas. If he plans to use only the loyal local troops the effort may well be a flop.

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By NARS NARA Date 12/20/96

I read the Ambassadors reply to todays message and non-concurred that we should go along feeling we should have more information. Even though Don says his effort is purely Vietnamese, U.S. will soon be involved whether we like it or not. I feel we should go along with only a sure thing. This or continue to go along with Diem until we have exhausted all pressures. The prestige of the U.S. is really involved one way or the other and it must be upheld at all costs.